

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUXEMBOURG 0531

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EEC

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER THORN'S COMMENTS ON EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1. FORMER SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE AND CURRENT PRESIDENT OF "COMMON CAUSE," MR. JOHN GARDNER IS CURRENTLY MAKING A STUDY TOUR OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS. ON MAY 19, HE VISITED LUXEMBOURG AND ALONG WITH CARGE AND MR. ARTHUR HOFFMAN, PAO AT THE USMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN BRUSSELS, HE CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER GASTON THORN. MAIN SUBJECT OF CONVERSATION WAS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MR. GARDNER'S QUESTION, THORN DISCUSSED IN SOME DETAIL THE PROBLEMS OF CREATING MEANINGFUL EC PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS GIVEN THE DISPARATE INTERESTS AND TRADITIONS OF NINE SOVEREIGN STATES. HE SAID THAT
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BOTH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING AND PRIME MINISTER

CHIRAC HAVE TOLD HIM IN PRIVATE THAT FRANCE WILL NEVER AGREE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A EUROPE-WIDE INSTITUTION ON THE MODEL OF THE OLD PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS THAT HAVE BEEN DISCREDITED BY CURRENT EUROPEAN HISTORY. THERE WAS NO QUESTION IN THE FRENCH VIEW, THORN ADDED, OF A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONTROLLING OR EVEN SERIOUSLY CHALLENGING DECISIONS MADE BY THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL.

3. IN STRICTLY PRIVATE CONVERSATION, THORN CONTINUED, GISCARD IS LESS BEARISH ABOUT THE PARLIAMENT. HE SEES, FOR EXAMPLE, THE POSSIBILITY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT PLAYING THE ROLE OF AN UPPER HOUSE ALONG THE LINES OF THE CURRENT FRENCH SENATE. THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL COULD WELL INDICATE AREAS OF COMPETENCE FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT. A FUTURE PARLIAMENT MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE A REVIEW AND COORDINATING FUNCTION. ACCORDING TO THORN, GISCARD MENTIONED DIVORCE AND ABORTION LEGISLATION BY WAY OF EXAMPLES. THE IDEA WOULD BE FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO CONSIDER NATIONAL MEMBER STATE LEGISLATION IN SUCH AREAS AND THEN RECOMMEND AMMENDMENTS OR MODIFICATIONS WHICH WOULD MAKE IT CONFORM TO UNIFORM COMMUNITY-WIDE STANDARDS.

4. IN SPITE OF GISCARD'S MORE FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE IN PRIVATE TWOARDS THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THORN WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE SHORT-TERM FUTURE OF THE INSTITUTION. HE CITED THE WELL-KNOWN COMMUNITY DIFFICULTIES ACCRUING FROM MEMBER STATES' UNWILLINGNESS TO CEDE REAL SOVEREIGNTY TO COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, FROM THE FACT THAT ONE OR ANOTHER MEMBER STATE IS ALWAYS QUASI-PARALYZED BY IMPENDING ELECTIONS, AND FROM THE FACT THAT MINISCULE INTEREST GROUPS HAVE A DISPROPORTIONATE VOICE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE NONE OF THE MEMBER STATES HAVE STRONG, VIABLE MAJORITY GOVERNMENTS. THIS LED THORN TO COMMENT THAT DEMOCRACY IS IN TROUBLE IN EUROPE AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE HANDFUL OF DEMOCRACIES THAT STILL EXIST TO GIVE SERIOUS THOUGHT AND STUDY TO THE PROBLEMS OF ADAPTING DEMOCRATIC THEORY AND PRACTICE TO THE NEW PRESSURES AND REALITIES OF THE MODERN WORLD.

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5. STILL ON THE SUBJECT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BUT IN SOMETHING OF AN ASIDE, MR. THORN SAID THAT FRENCH PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC, TO HIS SURPRISE, HAD RECENTLY TOLD HIM THAT FRANCE (READ THE UDR) IS NO LONGER REALLY WORRIED ABOUT NUMBERS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, I.E. ITS SIZE. THEIR CONCERN RATHER IS TO ASSURE THAT THE PARLIAMENT HAS "REASONABLE POWERS" AND DOES NOT REPRESENT A STEP BACKWARDS

TO THE OLD, UNSTABLE PARLIAMENTARY REGIMES (READ THE
FRENCH 4TH REPUBLIC). PHILLIPS

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